

LETTERS

Digitization Won't Compromise a Commander's Freedom of Action

Dear Sir:

As the Army moves to make a technological leap in doctrine with the advent of digitization, it is nice to see discourse about the possible ill effects of the move to Force XXI. Captain Bateman's article "Force XXI and the Death of *Auftragstaktik*," from the January-February 1996 issue, brings forth some valid issues, but I believe that he draws the wrong conclusion. Digitization of the battlefield does not mean the death of *auftragstaktik* or the loss of independence of action by company commanders. Both will be retained in the digital force, but higher level commanders will be better able to conduct planning, manage resources, and issue FRAGOs to subordinate commanders.

Captain Bateman quotes Ronald Bashista's definition of *auftragstaktik*, identifying its four components. Bateman places great emphasis on what he believes is the paramount component, independence of action. He further proposes that digitization will restrict the company commander's independence of action by providing battalion and brigade commanders with a greater amount of raw data than the company commander has access to. He is quite correct in his conviction that company commanders "bouncing across the terrain" will have little opportunity to consult their digital displays, but the conclusion that he draws from this is incorrect. Digitization will not result in the devaluation of the company commander's authority that he fears.

Higher level commanders already have access to a greater amount of combat information and intelligence than their company commanders. The company commander's view of the battlefield is limited to what he and his subordinates can see and what information he can glean by eavesdropping on the battalion command frequency. Brigade and battalion commanders have dedicated reconnaissance soldiers (battalion scouts, ADA scouts, COLTs, CI/IPW teams); highly specialized information gathering equipment (GSR, signal intercept, Firefinder); access to division and higher collected information (LRSD, divisional scouts, Guardrail, J-STARS); and a full-time staff section to process this information into intelligence. Even without digitization, higher level commanders (and their O3 battle captains) have a better view of the whole battlefield than the company commander.

This better view allows higher level commanders to make decisions and give orders that may seem irrational to anyone divorced from seeing the whole battlefield, but are calculated to accomplish the mission. In terms of *auftragstaktik*, the com-

pany commander must have the obedience to follow his commander's orders — not blind obedience created by fear, but obedience built through trust and respect for the commander's competence. Company commanders must trust that their commander is focused on the success of the mission and execute his orders, however illogical they may seem. The commander who questions his orders without just cause is a force detractor. Independence of action comes not from a company commander operating independently from his battalion, fighting his company based on his own limited view of the battlefield, but rather from the freedom to execute the commander's orders in the manner that best fits the factors of METT-T. True, any battalion commander can usurp the company commander's authority by giving orders directly to platoon leaders, but in doing so, he loses the ability to effectively control his battalion. Digitization will not increase the tendency of higher level commanders to bypass company commanders, but merely increase the amount of information available to paint the picture of the whole battlefield. Captain Bateman suggests that commanders will "become tied to the information node" and command from their BCVs. Currently, the tactical operations center has the ability to replicate the functions of the proposed BCV, albeit non-digitally. Despite the access to information, radio nets, and battlefield operating systems representatives, commanders chose to position themselves forward at the critical point. Executive officers occupy the tactical operations center, assisting the commander by synchronizing the battlefield operating systems. Future commanders will not necessarily want access to the raw information as it flows from the digital network. Rather, they will want their staffs to transform the information into short and concise intelligence bytes that can be readily used to make decisions. By allowing the executive officer and staff to conduct their functions, the commander is not tied to the information nodes, but can move forward to the critical point.

Digitization is not the threat to the company commander's authority that Captain Bateman believes it is. Digitization will increase the amount of information and the speed of its flow. This in turn will sharpen the resolution of the commander's view of the battlefield and reduce some of the fog of war confusion. It could revolutionize the way we fight and increase, rather than decrease, the importance of the company on the battlefield.

Company commanders will continue to be useful in the age of digitization. They will still be required to execute orders and their commander's intent without the commander holding their hands each step of the way. They will still have the independence of action to execute their orders as they see fit. They will not (and do not)

have the freedom to roam the battlefield, fighting as independent companies.

When company commanders receive their orders, they will still need the four components of *auftragstaktik* to effectively execute those orders. They will need the tactical competence to effectively fire and maneuver on the enemy, the self-esteem to know that they can accomplish their orders without having to be guided, the independence of action to apply tactics and doctrine to the situation at hand, and the obedience to follow their commander's orders.

CPT GARRETT L. IDE
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Vilseck, Germany

Bradley FIST Mounting Will Harm G/VLLD's Lasers

Dear Sir:

I read with great interest CPT Crowson's and SSG Peterson's well-written article on converting an M3 Bradley for use as a FIST track ("Now Make a FIST...," Mar-Apr 96). They are both to be saluted for applying innovation to solve a long recognized problem in the field. We all know what a "dog" the M981 is.

Unfortunately, hard mounting the G/VLLD on top of the turret as shown will ultimately bring serious harm to the device. In the M981 turret, the G/VLLD is mounted on a floating plate to dampen vibration during movement. This plate "locks down" only in a firing configuration. Without such an arrangement, the G/VLLD's laser rods will be destroyed, sending the unit back to the depot at a cost of about \$100,000. If the money isn't a concern, the lack of combat readiness should be.

It's a sad commentary on TRADOC and AMC that good folks in the field have to go to such lengths to have a useable system. A wide array of upgrades have been proposed for the M981 to solve its problems until the BFIST arrives. All have been rejected for fear that providing an interim fix to the system will threaten the BFIST program. These upgrades, many of which are fully developed and immediately available to the field, include everything from upgraded power trains (from the M113A3 package), to improved north-seeking gyros, and a new turret to cut set-up time and eliminate much of the FIST's easily recognized signature. In most cases, these upgrades would have paid for themselves with their O&M savings before the much needed BFIST is fielded.

In an age where the requirements process is so carefully supported with sophisticated computer models and gigabytes of

analytical data, it's a shame that common sense is overcome by politics, leaving our soldiers to fend for themselves with welding rods and drill bits.

STEVE SHELTON
MAJ, OD
USAR

Resources Aren't There For Field Trains Command Post

Dear Sir:

Once again, I am generally pleased with the current issue of *ARMOR* (Mar-Apr 96). You truly set the standard in both looking forward and reviewing the past in each and every issue, however, the articles regarding present operations and organizations might stand some improvement. Specifically, I refer to CPT Kevin Banks' article, "The Field Trains Command Post — Organizing for Success." CPT Banks makes several great suggestions for the new HHC commander of the cavalry, armor, or mechanized infantry battalion. His design for the organization and execution of a field trains command post could well result in changes to all of our Tables of Organization and Equipment (TO&E). There is, however, one real problem with much of what CPT Banks suggests... reality.

Reality is that armor and mechanized infantry MTO&Es have no allocation for the Field Trains Command Post (FTCP) beyond the commander's HMMWV and one GP Medium.

Reality is that armor and mechanized infantry MTO&Es do not allocate an "OPS NCO" or a "training NCO" or an "XO's driver." None of those positions are authorized. We all have them, true, but it's a bloody fight to get quality men in these positions, and the bottom line remains that when we start taking casualties, these "non-essential" positions are likely to be stripped, de facto as well as de jure.

Reality is that there is no "expando van" in an infantry or armor battalion to begin with. Nor are there "extra" M577s. I cannot speak for division or regimental cavalry squadrons, so perhaps CPT Banks' experiences are applicable there.

I have commanded an HHC for 24 months; I have deployed a mech TF field trains numerous times in those years, both here at Fort Hood and to the National Training Center. I cede the point that CPT Banks suggests what SHOULD BE. I hope that someday what should be, WILL BE. (I doubt it, but I still hope!) But for today, *ARMOR* needs to concern itself with accuracy in its articles. What is published in *ARMOR* is seen in the field as reality, and accepted as factual. The fact is that the Field Trains Command Post (and HHC company headquarters) is not acknowledged as a valid

resource requirement in our armor and infantry MTO&Es. Until it is, the FTCP will remain deficient in personnel and equipment, and the force will suffer.

ROBERT L. BATEMAN
CPT, IN
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Editor's note: Throughout ARMOR's 108-year history, it has been a magazine where the professional warfighter could discuss what should be versus what is and be guaranteed an audience. In that sense, it is not an official publication, as the views represent those of the authors (see page 2). We will continue that winning tradition.

External Gun Turrets: Refuting the Critics

Dear Sir:

There were two letters in the March-April issue that were very critical of my article, "The External Gun Turret: Often a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride" (*ARMOR*, Jan-Feb 96), one by J. Boucher, U.S. Army (Ret.) and the other by MAJ R. Duvall, USMC. These tirades did not offer any reasoned response to the issues that I brought up, but relied instead on personal insult and accused me of saying things I never said. In my article, I made several points: (1) That the EGT's loss of good direct vision from the turret top is a decrease in survivability; (2) That the elevated gun position decreases survivability because of high silhouette and exposed mechanisms; (3) That the EGT is excessively complex due to remote operation of subsystems; and (4) That there is an unacceptable loss of interior volume and surface area for mounting components. In the article, I explained why these four points were valid.

Prior to submitting the article, I asked three friends to read and comment on the article. They did so, and all their comments have been incorporated. All are experienced in design, testing, and production of combat vehicles. Two are experienced turret design engineers (real turrets, as well as paper turrets) and one is a program manager on development of an armored fighting vehicle. Two of the three are armored combat veterans of Vietnam, and all three must average about 30-35 years experience each. They are still active in the defense business. I omitted their identities because I anticipated a hostile reaction due to the fragile pride of the government developers.

The critical letters did not offer any reasoned counter-argument against my points except to say that:

(1) I am naive. (Boucher) Not true. I am very cynical, especially of federal programs

that spend a lot of money on not much more than paper.

(2) I use the kind of logic that opposed the machine gun and the airplane. (Boucher) Not true. That kind of logic was an entirely internal military problem which resulted in our going into WWI so poorly equipped that our allies had to furnish us with not only machine guns and airplanes, but also artillery and tanks. Not all this problem was due to penurious pre-war funding levels. Most of it was due to a dithering bureaucracy that couldn't make up its mind. "Machine gun development in this country floundered on one thing only: Those in authority could not make up their minds on what was wanted. ..." (Chinn, George M., LTC, USMC. *THE MACHINE GUN, History...Weapons*, p. 173, Vol. I of III. BuOrd, 1951.)

(3) I never said or implied that the external gun turret (EGT) was extensively tested. (Boucher and Duvall.) A bad idea doesn't need a lot of testing to reveal its limits. Even a design study, if honest, objective, and performed by competent engineers, can reveal most of the advantages and disadvantages of a particular approach. A final decision as to whether or not to enter production, of course, must follow extensive testing.

(4) Mr. Boucher questions my motives. My motive is to show the readers of *ARMOR* a different viewpoint of EGT than the one offered by proponents of the program. If Mr. Boucher has something concrete about my motives being other than advertised, say so.

(5) MAJ Duvall's first two paragraphs state his unfavorable opinion of my work, which comments I summarize as, to use his word, "drivel." His second paragraph is not related to anything I said. In regard to the ignorance of EGT that he ascribes to me, he should know that ideas such as EGT existed long before ASM and have been examined for other applications in parallel with ASM. Unfortunately, there are those in government who have fallen in love with EGT and it will, like Dracula, rise again from the grave to suck the taxpayers' blood.

(6) MAJ Duvall, in his third paragraph, speaks highly of the experts for whom he worked on the ASM program. I am sure they are experts, but the facts are that many major federal programs get into trouble, even though led by highly qualified people. For those who wish to learn more about ASM, try: *ARMORED SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION, Program Inconsistent With Current Threat and Budgetary Constraints*; U.S. GAO, Report No. B-244187, July 1991. AD-A242 142.

In conclusion, I say to my critics: Lighten up! The world will not end because the readers of *ARMOR* Magazine have had an

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opportunity to read something about EGT that you don't want them to see. The readers of *ARMOR* Magazine are smart enough to form their own judgments.

Additionally, I would like to retrospectively add two references to my article. Unfortunately, the references were rediscovered too late to be included in the article. The references are:

(1) Eshel, Lt. Col. David, IDF (Ret.), "Battlefield Survival," *NATIONAL DEFENSE Magazine*, September 1989. In this article, Col. Eshel makes some cogent points about vision and survivability. Here is an excerpt:

"...One of the foremost problems in tank fighting has always been to detect the enemy before he had a chance to fire for effect. Even the most sophisticated fire control equipment cannot replace the trained and experienced human eye in its surveillance and detection activities. ... detecting enemy targets is easier said than done. To... identify an enemy tank at maximum range is like trying to pinpoint a small mosquito on the far wall of a long room. ... Quick reaction to target acquisition is the key to survival, and any impediment in achieving first hit may be fatal." Lt. Col. Eshel is also a past contributor to *ARMOR*.

(2) Mergens, Maj. Michael and Capt. William Weldon, U.S. Army. "Now Where Do We Put It?" *ARMOR*, Nov-Dec 1994. This is three pages of good discussion on the stowage limitations in and on armored vehicles.

DON LOUGHLIN
Bellingham, Wash.

Armored SUSV Available If Requirements Exist

Dear Sir:

I read with interest the *ARMOR*, May-June 1996 article, "Bosnia Report," on the use of the M973A1 Small Unit Vehicle. The SUSV was one of the Army's first successes through the Foreign Comparative Testing Program in the early 1980s. Approximately 1,080 SUSVs have entered the Army inventory since the vehicle was Type Classified in March 1983. The FCT Program was created by Congress in 1977 to entice the services to consider allied equipment versus service-unique RDT&E programs. The goal of the program is to evaluate allied equipment towards the goal of fielding. Major successes include the Fox NBC Recon Vehicle and M1 chassis-based Heavy Assault Bridge. If a requirement for the BV-206S armored version of the SUSV does emerge, the IME Division can provide assistance in obtaining RDT&E funds. *ARMOR* readers are encouraged to contact our office for further information: Interna-

tional Materiel Evaluation Division, phone: (410) 278-1369.

TOM BUONAUGURIO
Project Officer
HQ, Army Materiel Command

Mine Plow Tank Useful In Restricted Terrain

Dear Sir:

I would like to commend SSG Krivitsky for, although indirectly, bringing to light a valid point which I had stressed during my years within the Armor community, "The Three to Six Second Advantage: Tank Combat in Restricted Terrain," (*ARMOR*, Mar-Apr 96). Although I believe that anticipating enemy attacks/ambushes involves more than having, "...your weapon drawn... accurately aimed and armed," the information provided was outstanding. The author's comments on 'recon by fire,' (The Crew's Critical Tasks para. 8, and Recon by Fire) were right on the money.

I thoroughly believe that routing the enemy with the use of the most unappreciated weapon system on board, the loader's M240 MG, has been for too long overlooked. Areas suspected, and capable, of concealing enemy positions should be saturated with fire, utilizing the loader's weapon system when applicable.

To effectively 'fight the tank,' a crew must be allowed and encouraged to use all of the tank's available weapon systems. Training crews, especially the loader, to attack, suppress, and destroy targets utilizing the correct weapon system in its respective role against its appropriate targets, is absolutely essential.

In addition, I believe that when moving in such an environment as described in the author's article, a tank equipped with a mine plow should be placed in the lead position. The advantages to this are numerous, as well as common sense. Besides the obvious advantage of having a mine plow available in a defile road with little or no bypass area, the convoy's survivability would be increased. The added protection afforded by the mine plow to absorb the impact of head-on and frontal oblique ATGMs and ATMs, would be substantial.

Also, the plow maintains the ability to prematurely detect and destroy antitank mines and disassemble obstacles. Another advantage would be 'bunker busting.' The ability to 'charge' a bunker and utilize the plow as a means of destruction, although risky, should not be overlooked.

The M1's mine plow is like having an engineer detachment on the front slope of the tank. Its role in combat operations should not be limited to that of clearing a 'swath' or paths for follow-on vehicles.

I would like to point out what I believe may be a weak point in the author's plan. When operating in such an environment, no task force should be deployed without infantry support. In such a situation as presented in the author's article, infantry support would grant an outstanding, as well as critical, scout advantage.

To drastically improve the task force's chance of survival (the bottom line here), crosstalk between armor and our attached infantry assets, both before and during the mission, would obviously be advantageous. These infantry units and their elements could best detect possible enemy AT and FO positions.

Also, let us not forget the M2's role in tank destroying, as well as quickly delivering infantry support. By utilizing bounding overwatches, coupled with already existing combined arms concepts, the combat strength and power of the task force drastically increases.

"Train as you fight" should be more than a catch phrase for professionals. It is imperative that we train our soldiers without mercy, teaching them the secrets of our trade, making them tomorrow's professional tankers. At the same time, we should be receptive to new and unorthodox ideas and suggestions. A new genre of soldiers means fresh and unburdened ideas and points of view. Let's listen to them.

JODEY C. KING
Frederick, Md.

Author Seeks Accounts Of War from the Turret

Dear Sir:

I'm a former member of the British Army's Royal Hussars and have been commissioned to write a book entitled "Voices from the Turret: Eighty Years of Allied Tank Warfare, 1916-1996." The idea is to have a definitive account of tank warfare as told by those who were in the turret. I am seeking first-hand accounts from Americans who served in tank combat in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, or the Gulf War. Accounts can cover all activities of service in combat tank units.

A final manuscript is to be submitted in January 1997, with publication scheduled that fall. Interested individuals should contact me at the following address:

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